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Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fifth session
22 February-4 March 2011
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Advocates for Youth, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

10-67578 (E) 301210

Please recycle

Statement*

1. We congratulate the Commission on the Status of Women on its fifty-fifth session for choosing to discuss the issue of access and participation of women and girls in education, training, and science and technology, including the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.

2. The areas of education and employment hold particular relevance for young women and girls and we encourage the Commission to pay special attention to the age-specific aspects of these issues in its deliberations.

3. In 2007, only 53 of the 171 countries with available data had achieved gender parity in both primary and secondary education, and an estimated 53 million school-age girls were not enrolled in primary schools.

4. The prospects for a girl's education decrease considerably if she lives among the poorest 20 per cent of households. A poor girl is four times less likely to attend school than a boy living among the wealthiest households. Opportunities for such a girl to attend secondary school are even narrower, not to mention the limited opportunities for post-secondary education.

5. Increased efforts are needed to ensure that girls of all ages remain in school, including the provision of comprehensive education on life skills, human sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, and increased funding and budgeting for educational services, including those that work to increase the attendance of younger women and girls in primary and secondary education.

6. Investing in young girls' education also contributes to the increased opportunity for productive employment. Currently, young people are most affected by unemployment; the International Labour Organization reported in 2010 that they are 2.68 times more likely than adults to be unemployed. Youth unemployment has reached a record high of 82.7 million youth globally. Among those youth who are employed, 152 million still live in extreme poverty, as they are badly paid, have insecure and unsafe jobs and lack access to adequate education and training. Therefore, initiatives addressing unemployment should focus on young people.

7. There must also be increased attention towards preventing early child marriage, as this practice violates girls' rights to pursue education and employment and attain a high standard of physical and mental health, and prevents them from achieving their highest potential. Child marriage decreases girls' ability to negotiate condom use, delay childbearing and prevent contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. This practice is a consequence of and contributes further to gender inequality.

8. In addition, there must be increased attention towards equipping young women with the information, skills and tools that they need to prevent unintended pregnancy. Pregnancy and childbirth-related complications are the leading cause of death for young women aged 15-19. Increased access to comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services, including contraceptives, will enable girls and young women to stay in school longer by preventing unwanted pregnancy, early childbearing, related morbidity and mortality, and sexually transmitted infections including HIV. Access to safe abortion and post-abortion care

* Issued without formal editing.

in case of unintended and unwanted pregnancies will also help them to stay in school longer. A comprehensive package of affordable, accessible, acceptable, and quality sexual and reproductive health services should be put in place to ensure that girls and young women do not die from pregnancy and childbirth-related complications and thereby are able to become productive members of their communities.

9. In summary, we request that the Commission emphasize in its conclusions the need for Governments to respect, protect, promote and fulfil:

(a) The right of girls and young women to participate and make free, informed decisions in all aspects of their lives, including in economic, labour, family and community spheres;

(b) The right of girls and young women to receive adequate and accurate information and education that enables them to lead healthy and productive lives;

(c) The right of girls and young women who are pregnant, mothers and/or HIV-positive to continue their education or employment;

(d) The right of girls and young women to have access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including an adequate supply and diversity of contraceptives, safe abortion, and tailored services for girls and young women living with HIV;

(e) The right of girls and young women to be free from early and forced marriage and all forms of violence and discrimination, to be educated and healthy, and contribute to the labour force in their communities and countries;

(f) The right of girls and young women to participate in decision-making and policy formulation at all levels, including those that affect their lives;

(g) The achievement of gender equality including through public education initiatives and law enforcement, to reduce inequality in education (including securing equal enrolment rates and reducing dropout rates), employment (including eliminating differences in wages paid to women and men and securing an equal number of women in senior management positions) and family life (including ensuring the equal right to inheritance, and protection from all forms of violence and discrimination, including rape within marriage);

(h) The right of women to decent work and a good working environment (with proper compensation, working conditions, and protection from environmental harm).

10. Action should be taken to revise existing discriminatory laws or policies and those that limit the participation of girls and women, including access to sexual and reproductive health services and life-skills programmes.

11. We also request the Commission to encourage the newly formed UN-Women, the United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women, to prioritize all of the above issues and to ensure that the perspectives of girls and young women are fully integrated in their work.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Education International, International Trade Union Confederation and Public Services International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement*

From the classroom to the workplace — positioning women for decent work in the knowledge economy

Introduction

Defining the broad context of gender and development

1. All countries of the world today are faced with the challenge of achieving sustainable economic growth in a globalizing world where technological and scientific knowledge are essential to progress. But given global and national inequities, they are inevitably approaching the challenges from very different starting points. In particular, in many countries, persistent gender inequalities in educational systems, in the school-to-work transition, and in working life need to be addressed. It is for this reason that the global trade union movement, represented at the Commission on the Status of Women by Education International, International Trade Union Confederation and Public Services International, is pleased to participate in the critical policy dialogue before its fifty-fifth session, focusing on the linkages between education and training, including in science and technology, and the world of work.

2. Investment in all quality public services is a key driver of development. As such, trade unions have grave concerns with the reductions to budgets supporting public services that Governments have undertaken in response to the current economic crisis. These cuts are having a negative impact on the provision of quality public services, which are central to eradicating poverty through the delivery of health care, education, and decent work for women. Investments in the public sector and in the social ministries charged with development, labour and gender equality should be increased not decreased in a time of crisis, if the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All goals are to be achieved.

3. Given the importance of poverty eradication and sustainable development, broadly defined, for economic and social progress, trade unions take the view that the topic of science and technology for women's employment, needs to be analysed in the broader context of the structured inequalities that deny women in different countries and economic sectors the opportunity to participate fully in and benefit from economic life. It should be recognized that the education of girls is of critical importance for the development of societies. The evidence base shows clearly that exclusions and discriminations begin early, often in the classroom or through denial of access to it. They are then perpetuated and exacerbated along the continuum from school to working life. Multiple dimensions compounding gender discrimination include economic status, geographic location, lack of access to quality public services, ethnicity and disability.

4. In many developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, children are failing to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills at the end of their primary school years. These countries are falling short of Education for All and Millennium Development Goals targets relative to girls graduating from primary school. Admittedly, strategies to improve access to education have been put in place. These

* Issued without formal editing.

have resulted in increased enrolment numbers for girls, and progress towards gender parity in primary school completion. High dropout rates are still prevalent, however, and they are higher for girls in a number of developing countries. Only 60 per cent of all children in sub-Saharan Africa complete primary school, with girls further behind than boys, showing a 55 per cent figure for primary school completion. It has been suggested that part of that differential can be explained by user fees. Where these are in place, parents are more motivated to spend their limited resources on their sons' education rather than on their daughters', since, in their view, investment in the latter will be reaped, not by them, but by their in-laws.

Laying the foundation for gender-inclusive approaches at all educational levels

5. Dropout rates are clearly associated with poverty, as is the related phenomenon of child labour, where girls are severely affected. In India, for example, 96 per cent of child labourers live in households where per capita income is less than $2 per day, and young girls account for 42 per cent of all children in employment. Girls face additional challenges of vulnerable, at-risk employment in the entertainment industry where they are victims of trafficking, or as domestic workers, where the majority of girls trapped in abusive child labour are to be found. Structured discriminations also affect the girl child in rural areas, given that some 70 per cent of poor women live in rural areas and are engaged in low wage employment as own-account workers or as workers on family farms, or in the informal economy. They can ill afford to keep their children at school, and once again prefer the girl child as family help.

6. Despite commendable progress in developing education systems and addressing gender disparities in line with the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All goals, the foregoing analysis shows that severe development challenges still need to be overcome. Addressing them in an adequate manner is critical for laying the foundation for progress with gender-inclusive education at all levels, including in science and technology. In addition, where satisfactory progress in science and technology is being made, gender disparities persist, and need to be addressed.

7. In some regions and countries, (Latin America and the Caribbean, and North Africa), girls and young women are showing good academic performance in science and technology at the secondary and tertiary levels, even outperforming boys and young men. However, statistics indicate that girls and women show a preference for the life sciences (medicine, biology, biochemistry), rather than for physics, engineering and computer sciences. A number of factors contribute to these choices: gender stereotyping of so-called male and female career paths, which is often reflected in teaching materials; a lack of support for programmes to tackle the gender stereotyping and segregation in education; and the lack of female role models for girls, both with respect to teachers of science and technology at all levels of education, as well as women who have pursued professional or managerial careers in the area of science and technology.

Academic achievement and professional advancement in science and technology — a mismatch

8. Where girls gain access, they achieve. Clearly, increasing numbers of women are completing university level programmes in science and technology and

engineering, but this is not being translated to equal career chances and salaries. After initial entry into science and technology fields, opportunities for career advancement are minimal, and retention is poor. A high level of vertical segregation has been noted, with women concentrated in the lower echelons of the occupational ladder, facing barriers that hinder advancement to senior research and managerial positions or professorships. Attrition rates for girls and women have been noted across the school-to-work continuum in science and technology fields, but are particularly marked in the university to work transition. There is clearly a mismatch between educational attainment for women on the one hand, and career advancement and job remuneration on the other, as compared with men; and pay inequity is also persistent.

9. The high attrition rates noted have been attributed to the fact that both classroom and work environments in the science and technology field are hostile to women, while they reward men's performance. Gender stereotypes about these being "masculine territory" help to sustain the gender unfriendliness with regard to women's pursuit of careers in these fields. In the scientific environment, the prevailing ethos rewards long hours of commitment to professional endeavours and publications. Without the necessary policies in place to encourage an equal sharing of family responsibilities between women and men, this represents a further barrier for women who must then combine professional with family responsibilities. Not only are women's roles in social reproduction and the care economy not recognized, women are actually penalized for their efforts to balance these roles with professional careers in the science and technology field.

A holistic approach

10. Denying women opportunities for full participation in the science and technology fields results in the loss of a valuable resource pool, much needed for contributing to the shaping of a gender-inclusive, people-centred, knowledge economy; and it is a denial of women's fundamental rights. To be sustainable, policies that address this sphere of gender inequality must operate within a holistic policy framework geared to tackling the full range of development challenges and structured inequalities that impede the smooth transition from the classroom to a decent workplace.

11. Achieving quality education is essential. Policies for quality education need to be formulated along three major axes, and in a gender-inclusive way:

(a) Improving the educational curriculum and methodologies to make them relevant to the achievement of quality education for all, lifelong learning, and the world of work; ensuring an adequate supply of textbooks and materials; removing embedded gender stereotypes; organizing gender-sensitive training for teachers;

(b) Improving the physical and material environment in terms of user-friendly buildings which ensure they are safe spaces for girls, including sanitary facilities; ensuring an adequate supply of technical and information technology equipment, and making them accessible and attractive to girls;

(c) Improving the cadre of teachers in quantity and quality through adequate recruitment, induction, and retention strategies, including pre- and in-service training, opportunities for professional development and advancement, adequate remuneration; removing pay inequity.

12. Moreover, there is a need for policies, programmes and campaigns geared to raising awareness and combating negative stereotypes, and encouraging girls to embark on all fields of study, including science and technology.

Creating an enabling environment in support of women's access to full employment and decent work

13. Access to quality public services, whether in health and social care, water and sanitation, electricity and fuel, public administration, vocational training and further education, is fundamental to women's access to full employment and decent work. An unequal distribution of household and care responsibilities between women and men continues to limit women's full participation in labour markets and in decent work that is permanent, and secure. Gender segregation further limits women's full participation in labour markets. Women — and in particular young women — are especially vulnerable to "precarious" employment that is temporary or casual, generally low-paid, and with little or no social protection. Policy measures aimed at ensuring women's access to full employment and decent work must address these prevailing decent work deficits.

Conclusions

Applying a comprehensive policy and normative framework

14. The policy and normative framework exists to underpin such an enabling environment so it delivers on real gender equality. It must now be applied. The framework consists notably of:

(d) The Beijing Platform for Action, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(e) Key International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions: the Equal Remuneration Convention 1951 (No. 100), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).

15. Education International, International Trade Union Confederation and Public Services International call on Member States at the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to introduce and strengthen policy interventions within this policy and normative framework, geared to overcoming the structured discriminations and barriers affecting the life chances of girls and women in terms of adequate education and training that prepare them and enhance their opportunities for full and productive employment and decent work. It is also important that policymakers establish consultative processes that allow for social dialogue with trade unions who, from their experience, can contribute greatly to the policymaking process that boosts the important nexus between education and training, and decent work. Collective bargaining should be used as a key instrument to promote gender equality outcomes such as pay equity, equal opportunity for professional advancement, maternity protection and the equal sharing of family responsibilities, as enshrined in the ILO conventions cited above.

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Statement submitted by Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement*

1. Northern Ireland Women's European Platform is an umbrella organization representing women's organizations, affiliated groups, individuals and observers from across Northern Ireland.

2. The education of women and girls and their equal access to full employment and decent work is central to progressing gender equality, but this is particularly true in conflict and post-conflict societies where women's economic independence and full participation in public life is for lasting peace and stability.

3. As elsewhere in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and in many other parts of the world, Northern Ireland has seen significant advances in educational opportunities for girls. Women's participation in paid work has increased yet significant inequalities remain in educational and labour market opportunities and outcomes. These include gender pay gap, occupational segregation, stereotyping of women's and men's roles and structural barriers which reduce women's access to full and equal employment.

4. The economic recession and the impact of public sector cuts on Great Britain and Northern Ireland have, and will continue to have a negative impact on women's employment.

5. The barriers to women's equal participation and progression in paid work in Northern Ireland include:

(a) Inadequate childcare provision;

(b) Gender pay gap;

(c) Occupational segregation;

(d) Concentration of women in particular areas of the part-time labour market;

(e) Hidden women in the economy;

(f) Stereotyping of women and men;

(g) Inequalities in educational opportunities and how these translate to the labour market;

(h) Underrepresentation of women in decision-making.

Paid work

6. The employment rate for women in Northern Ireland is 61.4 per cent, 4.1 per cent less than in Great Britain. There continues to be gender differences in employment between women and men. Women are much more likely to work part-time which impacts on earnings (the most significant pay gap is in relation to part-time employment) and progression opportunities. The number of female part-time jobs has increased by 66 per cent since 1984. Much of this growth has been in service sector employment in Northern Ireland between 1997 and 2007. However, this is a low-pay sector, with little security for women. It is also a sector which has been disproportionately affected by the economic recession. The decision of women

* Issued without formal editing.

to work part-time is frequently portrayed by Government as a "choice". However there is considerable evidence that women are constrained in their employment opportunities by the lack of affordable childcare and their unpaid caring work.

7. Women are significantly underrepresented in engineering, building and planning and technology and highly overrepresented in health and social care and hospitality and retail sectors. Evidence suggests that reasons for this include stereotypical careers and training advice and a stereotypical and limited range of options for girls and women on Government training programmes. Even in areas where there is a predominance of female employees they are underrepresented in management and on the boards of companies.

8. Figures for 2009 record the female level of entrepreneurial activity in Northern Ireland at 2.4 per cent compared to 8 per cent for males. This is equal to a potential shortfall of 28,000 female-owned businesses if the rates for women and men were equal. Entrepreneurial activity is particularly low among young women. It is also relatively low among the 45-54 age groups, and in this age band the gap between women in Northern Ireland and those across the rest of the United Kingdom is widest.

Childcare

9. Northern Ireland lags behind Britain in relation to childcare provision and the ratio of childcare places is 1:6.4 compared to 1:4 in England. The national childcare strategy introduced by the Westminster Government was not introduced in Northern Ireland, nor does Northern Ireland have an equivalent of the 2006 UK Childcare Act, which placed a statutory duty on public authorities to provide childcare. The need for a comprehensive and adequately resourced childcare strategy for Northern Ireland has been identified by successive research studies and consultations. The urgency of this need is exacerbated by the introduction of stringent welfare to work policy in Northern Ireland in 2010, which places conditionality on lone parents with a child aged 7 or over receiving social protection benefits to show that they are actively seeking work. In Britain, enhanced childcare provision was seen by Government as a necessary precondition for such legislation.

Education

10. Educational outcomes for girls in many areas exceed those of young men leading to a belief that there are few equality issues. However, educational outcomes are also influenced by other factors such as social class and ethnicity and many young women experience multiple disadvantages and end up in a group of young people not in employment, education or training. Young women in this group have often disengaged from education as a result of teenage pregnancy, caring responsibilities or difficult home lives. Recent research from the United Kingdom's Institute for Public Policy Research indicates that overall youth unemployment in the United Kingdom stands at 18 per cent of 16 to 24 year olds, the highest level in 15 years. Its research also found that among 16 to 24 year olds, unemployment is highest for those with no qualifications. For young women, unemployment had increased by nearly 18 per cent since March 2008. The Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland estimates that of the 24,000 newly unemployed in Northern Ireland last year, approximately 9,000 (37.5 per cent) were aged between 18 and 24 and when compared to the United Kingdom average, youth unemployment is now a

bigger problem in Northern Ireland with the rate above the United Kingdom average of 18.0 per cent for July-September 2009. Figures for Northern Ireland also compare unfavourably with many Organization for Economic Cooperation in Europe countries.

Decision-making and public life

11. We would strongly argue that the limited progress in Northern Ireland in relation to equality for women and girls is linked to underrepresentation and marginalization of women in decision-making. In the current legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland only 15 out of 108 members are women. Only 22 per cent of councillors in local government are women and fewer than 34 per cent of members of public bodies are women (these bodies are responsible for significant aspects of public administration in Northern Ireland, including health and social care, education and equality). Research with young women in Northern Ireland identified that they are "still waiting for equality" and feel they have little opportunity to change this. Despite pressure from international bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and obligations set out in Security Council resolution 1325 and measures set out in the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland there has been a lack of concrete measures to address this underrepresentation. Even where measures have been introduced, such as the Sex Discrimination Election Candidates Act, this has not been used.

Impact on legacy of conflict on young women

12. In Northern Ireland the tendency has been to focus on young men in terms of discussion and policies relating to conflict and peacebuilding. Research findings demonstrate that the conflict has had a significant impact on the lives of young women, on opportunities, and how they view their communities and society. Living in segregation, fear and hardship has restricted opportunities in many areas of their lives, including education and employment. There have been few opportunities for young women to understand, make sense of, and deal with their experiences of growing up in a country with such a bloody past nor indeed has there been sufficient acknowledgment of, or attention given, to the fact that broader gender inequalities between men and women have exacerbated the invisibility of women and girls. We would recommend that there needs to be a greater acknowledgement of the impact of the conflict on girls and young women to ensure they have a voice and take leadership positions.

13. Northern Ireland Women's European Platform recommends that:

(a) Measures be taken to address the educational disadvantages of girls and young women by tackling underachievement, and to recognize the root causes of disadvantage and ensure opportunities through formal and informal education to re-engage with education;

(b) Negative language such as "economically inactive" be removed, and the financial contribution that women make to the economy in their roles as carers, family businesses and agriculture be calculated and recognized;

(c) The inequalities created by the fact that women and girls continue to provide substantial unpaid caring work, and the financial and other disadvantages resulting from this, be addressed;

(d) The gender pay gap be closed by strengthening legislation and policies implementing these by the "fast track", and mandatory pay audits and flexible working arrangements for men and women be introduced;

(e) Stereotyping be eradicated in occupations by ensuring education and careers advice is non-gendered and encourages girls and women to enter non-traditional areas;

(f) The urgent need for childcare strategies be met, with high quality affordable childcare with clear implementation targets. Childcare should be recognized as a family issue;

(g) Governments commit to ensuring that budget changes do not affect women disproportionately;

(h) In providing the opportunities to increase the access of women and young girls to full employment, Member States address the lack of women in decision-making and politics. This should include the introduction of special temporary measures as recommended by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2008. Governments should ensure compliance with the obligations set out in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

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Statement submitted by UNIFEM Australia, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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Please recycle

Statement*

1. Relating to the priority theme of the fifty-fifth session for the Commission on the Status of Women, the issues that UNIFEM Australia Incorporated believes are necessary to be discussed during the Commission on the Status of Women relate to:

- Education and vocational training options
- The gender pay gap and workplace discrimination
- Disadvantaged groups' unequal access to employment and education

Education and vocational training

2. While Australia continues to rank quite high in women's educational attainment and participation, the Australian Human Rights Commission has noted that educational choices remain highly segregated on the basis of gender during primary, secondary school and tertiary education. This is one cause for concern which has predominantly pushed women into "feminized industries". The persistence of unequal pay in these industries is as much a social problem as it is systemic. The Australian Government Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency has made strides in identifying positive steps towards greater equality in workplace relations. This includes adopting and promoting a gender-sensitive work and training framework for Australian industry using sex disaggregated data. However, this must also be expanded to examine compounding conditions such as disability and race that significantly alter the experience of gender discrimination and job inaccessibility in the workplace.

3. The concluding observations report of Australia's recent Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women identifies concerns regarding segregation of fields of study in higher education and vocational training which ultimately results in occupational sex segregation of the labour market. The Commonwealth Government has stated its intention to close the gap in skills among Australia's workforce by expanding the places in a more diverse vocational and educational training system through the "skilling Australia" policy. However, this policy actually concentrates on male participation rates in the industry with a lack of consideration to the difficulty in accessing childcare as a general impediment to workforce participation without acknowledging that it impacts overwhelmingly on women.

4. Access to affordable childcare and support services for maternity leave are key components that determine women's access to and participation in full employment. Not only are women often discriminated against because of their continued role as primary caregivers often resulting in careers characterized by less stability and temporary positions, but additionally they suffer from a lack of long-term economic security through financial independence. Such is true of Australian women who cannot access superannuation payments unless employers are willing to continue contributing while on maternity leave. This leaves the potential for workplace discrimination much higher.

* Issued without formal editing.

5. The organization makes the following Government recommendations:

(a) Data related to school retention, completion and achievements must be disaggregated and cross-tabulated on the basis of gender, ethnicity and location;

(b) The State must allocate resources for women to pursue programmes of study and professional development in vocational training that are traditionally dominated by men. Particular attention must be paid to addressing preconceived notions about the capabilities of women within such trades;

(c) The newly introduced paid parental leave scheme, to begin 1 January 2011, must be re-examined after two years to account for the necessity of including a Government-funded superannuation scheme, a paternity leave component which reduces the household burden on women and to be more flexible enabling a household response to the division of caring responsibilities.

Gender pay gap and discrimination in the workplace

6. Noted most recently in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for Australia, the gender pay gap in Australia is not only continuing, but worsening. Sexual harassment continues to be a serious problem in the workplace which not only deters women's entry into the workforce but significantly hinders a woman's advancement to an executive level position. The May 2010 report of the national centre for social and economic modelling reveals that the major contributing factor to this ongoing pay gap in Australia is simply being female.

7. In May 2010, the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency reported that the gender pay gap had improved to 17.3 per cent, but that the average weekly ordinary time earnings of females working full-time were $1,105.70 per week or 231.40 Australian dollars (AUD) per week less than their male counterparts, who earned an average of AUD 1,337.10 per week in May 2010. While the data show a decrease of 0.7 per cent over the quarter of 2010 (from 18.0 per cent), the gender pay gap in Australia has persisted at between 16 and 18 per cent for over a decade.

8. Implementing the recommendations from the 2009 inquiry into pay equity conducted by the house standing committee on employment and workplace relations is a widely acknowledged necessity within the Australian women's sector. This includes the introduction of a distinct Government unit within "Fair Work Australia" to monitor and combat sex discrimination in the workplace. Furthermore, a repeatedly missing component within current Australian anti-discrimination legislation concerns intersecting discrimination and specific forms of disadvantage that arise from the combination of gender with other discriminated positions including race, disability and sexuality. In its current status, Australia's fair work act of 2009 does not adhere to a comprehensive approach that addresses discriminatory workplace practices and schemes, and cultural barriers embedded in industrial and wider social structures. The consistency of cultural and social barriers embedded in Australia's workplace present a necessity for reform within the fair work act of 2009 in order to ensure access to decent employment conditions for women.

9. The organization makes the following Government recommendations:

(a) The provisions put forward in the "Make it fair" report are immediately adopted, including proposed amendments to the fair work act of 2009 that afford greater powers for the sex discrimination commissioner to act on wage discrimination;

(b) The establishment of a pay equity unit within "Fair Work Australia" with a broad mandate for change against sex discrimination in addition to developing and monitoring pay gaps mechanisms.

Disadvantaged groups' unequal access to employment and education

10. Distinct groups of women have been identified as facing a significant number of social and infrastructure barriers to initial training, education and ongoing access to and equality in employment in Australia, including women with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and migrant women. Of greater note are the frequent circumstances where women from such backgrounds often face two or more disadvantages and forms of discrimination, therefore placing them in double or triple jeopardy.

11. The concluding observations of Australia's recent Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted that women with disabilities are almost entirely absent from key leadership, education and employment opportunities. This represents a global trend identified whereby stigmas and exclusion resulting from limited knowledge and understanding of disabilities intersect with gender-based discriminations to place these women even at more risk of exclusion. This is undoubtedly similar to the situation of migrant women, however is exacerbated by their experience in unsafe working conditions as domestic labourers and factory workers who lack English skills and therefore puts them in a situation of greater vulnerability where they are unable to negotiate safe working conditions.

12. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have continued to lack access to adequate education in regional areas. This presents a diverse picture of the barriers facing training and education for women in Australia. Government programmes aimed at encouraging women's economic participation and full employment must therefore account for this diversity. Clearly, sociocultural factors, that may disadvantage girls from entering and pursuing a career in the sciences or technology both implicit and explicit, must be taken into account when formulating policies, including how gender may combine with other factors of inequality and which may leave girls doubly disadvantaged.

13. The organization recommends that Commonwealth, state and territory Governments implement programmes that develop skills and enhance employment opportunities for women while identifying specific barriers to diverse women's participation.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

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Please recycle

Statement*

1. The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies exists to advocate for the human rights of criminalized women — both nationally and internationally. Despite a lack of evidence of increased crime rates, imprisonment of women is increasing at an alarming rate, with numbers doubling in several countries over the past decade. The vast majority of women prisoners are victims of violent crime, particularly abuse as an adult and/or child. Most are poor; many are homeless prior to imprisonment. The majority face mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

2. Women prisoners' right to education, training and access to full employment and decent work continues to be systemically breached in Australia, Canada and throughout the world. As a result, criminalized women are trapped in a downward spiral of poverty and powerlessness, and generally leave prison at increased risk of further criminalization.

3. Internationally, most women are criminalized as a result of previous failures to address these and other basic human rights. Prison populations are characterized by the highly disproportionate numbers of women from socially disadvantaged groups. Most women are imprisoned for minor offences as a direct or indirect result of poverty, particularly non-violent property- and drug-related offences. Women's vulnerability to committing poverty-related crime is exacerbated by the failure of Member States to meet their obligations to provide adequate and appropriate education, training and access to employment.

4. Further, the majority of women prisoners are mothers of dependent children, and were the primary family's main source of income prior to imprisonment. The failure of Member States to meet women's rights also breaches the rights of their children, which perpetuates poverty and condemns the children of women prisoners to a significantly increased risk of criminalization in later life.

5. In both Australia and Canada, opportunities for education and training for women prisoners have deteriorated over recent years. Prison authorities also rely on prisoner labour. As a result, more women prisoners are required to perform menial prison and certain industrial labour, rather than participate in education or training. Compared to male prisoners, women have little choice of prison labour, despite substantial evidence that the provision of education and training to women prisoners can play an essential role in reducing recidivism rates and improving the overall post-release prognosis for women and their children.

6. Programmes commonly associated with education and training in women's prisons fall into four categories:

- Offending-related programmes provided by prison authorities
- Other educational programmes provided by prison authorities
- Minimal vocational training associated with prison labour provided by prison authorities
- Access to education and training provided by non-prison bodies

* Issued without formal editing.

Offending-related programmes

7. So-called "compulsory" rehabilitation programmes, provided by prison authorities for women prisoners, should not be confused with education or training. They do not meet the definition of education in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/20.

8. These programmes have little currency beyond prison walls. With few exceptions, they are generally designed for male prisoners. They address the criminogenic profile of male prisoners, which is very different from that of women prisoners. The programmes are therefore of negligible value in their stated goal of reducing recidivism among women prisoners. Further, they fail to provide women prisoners with education or training, which improves their ability to overcome poverty through accessing full employment and decent work. And, since completion of these programmes is often a requirement of parole, women's lesser access to these programmes than men commonly results in delays in women's release, and extended hardship for their families and children.

Other prison-run educational programmes

9. Women prisoners consistently report that the quality of programmes provided by prison authorities (such as numeracy/literacy and art/craft) is unacceptable. Limited choices are available to women, and most are sex-role stereotyped. Poor standards of teaching are exacerbated by the fact that prison authorities are increasingly unwilling to allow external educators, particularly non-governmental organizations, to enter prisons and provide educational services.

Training associated with prison labour

10. The industry options available to women prisoners are generally sex-role stereotyped (e.g., food preparation, janitorial duties, textile industries or laundry). Even where the skills developed are marketable, this focus sentences criminalized women to working in low paid, low skilled jobs. Little of the industry-based training available is tied to accredited outcomes that would improve women's opportunities to access full-time, decent work following release. Again, women repeatedly report that the quality of training is exceptionally poor, with so-called "trade instructors" functioning more as worker supervisors than teachers. Few women have access to the means to complete a recognized training programme, due both to the piecemeal offering of parts of these programmes and women's inability to continue a training programme when moved from prison to prison.

External education and training

11. Very few women are allowed to engage in full-time study. These women are also consequently financially penalized, because of lost — albeit minimal — wages, compared with their counterparts who work in other prison employment. (In Queensland, women can earn more than five times the income of a full-time student if they work in prison industries, but this is not generally the situation for women in Canadian prisons.) Furthermore, women must often pay for their study. In Canada, women have limited access to computers and no Internet access, so educational opportunities are even more limited. Even if approved to commence a course of study, women are vulnerable to arbitrary withdrawal of such a privilege. The current

trend towards prison labour camps as the only model of low security imprisonment in Australia, and a lack of minimum security prisons for women in Canada, means women are in higher security prisons, rather than the community, in order to undertake education.

12. In summary, the limited education and training available to women prisoners is highly inadequate. Women prisoners are rarely encouraged to participate actively in all aspects of education and prison authorities consistently fail to facilitate and support education as much as possible. Disadvantaged groups of women (particularly indigenous women; other women from minority racial groups; women with mental and intellectual disabilities; and young women) are particularly vulnerable to discrimination in their access to education. Further, the majority of women prisoners (short-term and remand prisoners) are generally ineligible for external education and few qualify to participate in prison-run programmes.

13. Ultimately, limited access to community-recognized education and training reduces women's opportunities of gaining full employment and decent work following release. It is essential that education and training for women prisoners include developmental education (e.g., secondary, post-secondary and vocational), opportunities for quality formal on-the-job training, part-time developmental courses and self-directed learning. Women's prisons should provide learning-friendly environments, supported by positive attitudes from prison authorities and ready access to libraries and other study facilities.

14. Improvements in women's access to education, training, full employment and decent work — both within and outside prisons — could play a central role in stemming the current epidemic of criminalization of women, and its accompanying multi-generational threats. Our success in addressing women's human rights should be measured by our ability to address the rights of the most vulnerable populations — including women prisoners.

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Statement submitted by the International Council of Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement*

1. The Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals have highlighted issues integral to improving the lives of women and the girl child. One of the most critical of these issues is education.

2. The International Council of Women, in expressing grave concerns about the matters below, asks that serious and particular attention be given to their causes and effects.

Lack of access to adequate basic education for girls

3. The right to an education leading to a basic level of literacy is enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Despite these declarations, elementary education is still not universally available to girls.

4. Among the major problems being reported by our members both in developed and developing countries are:

- Girls not being allowed (by their parents) to attend school.
- Girls who go to school being expected to undertake household duties before and after school.
- Girls' domestic duties curtailing their time for homework.
- Parents, including mothers (also uneducated), not appreciating the value of educating girls.
- Poor quality teaching results in girls leaving school unable to read and write. As a consequence, parents fail to see any benefit to the girl, her family or community, in her attendance at school.
- Parents and communities perceiving greater value in selling the girl into forced and early marriage, rather than educating her.
- Girls being denied equal opportunities with boys to prepare them for higher education and pathways to a career.

5. Keeping girls in a state of ignorance has profound effects upon the global community. Study after study has concluded that the advancement of a country is dependent upon the education of its female citizens. Educated girls and women are able to take advantage of programmes designed to assist them; they are better able to support their families and so contribute to the economy of their country.

Access to science, engineering and technology training for girls

6. The International Council of Women notes that the attitude still exists within certain societies that women and girls are not suited for careers in science, engineering and information technology.

7. The Council, however, notes that countries in the Far East continue to experience high demand for workers in technology fields, especially computing. Without access to training in these fields, women and girls are unable to obtain this

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well-paid employment and look after their families. They are trapped in low paid domestic work which, in turn, keeps their children in poverty.

8. In light of the above, the International Council of Women recommends that Governments be urged to ensure that girls and women have access to good basic education with pathways open to higher education and careers, particularly in the areas of science, engineering and technology and to recognize that progress for women is progress for all.

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Statement submitted by Misión Mujer and Vida y Familia de Guadalajara, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement*

A new, more inclusive gender perspective through equitable access to education for youth

1. Education, a recognized human right, is essential to the development of human capital, and more specifically, to the future of young generations. Education, which is regarded as the key tool for motivating the genuine development of any country, must be universal, equitable and of high quality if it is to eradicate poverty and many of the other major problems we face, including violence, drugs, economic and social inequalities, and diseases such as AIDS.

2. Accordingly, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women recognizes the need for women to have full and equal access to education and training as one of the twelve areas for concern requiring urgent measures from Governments and the international community.

3. At its forty-first session held in 1997, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women recommended the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the education sector. Since then, important international efforts have been initiated to empower women in the area of education. These have yielded results in the majority of countries, particularly in terms of literacy rates, which now show a good gender balance. Recent research by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) found that on average, a greater proportion of women had obtained a university degree than men (46 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively) in OECD member countries.

4. Yet work remains to be done in terms of the education of young women, given the many reasons girls drop out of school. Gender inequality is most evident at the secondary school level, as a greater number of girls than boys leave school before completing their studies, particularly in rural or impoverished areas, for reasons including early marriage, adolescent pregnancy and the need to assist the family or learn practical skills in order to start working.

5. However, the issue of gender equity must not be approached from a single point of view, but rather from both the male and female perspective. It is therefore important to promote an integrated gender perspective in the home and at school, one which obviously includes issues that affect women, as well as the problems men face. Men also suffer as a result of the stereotypical acts that define "what it means to be a man", such as the glorification of violence, criminal behaviour, unsafe sexual practices, substance abuse and even suicide. The consequences of the masculinity crisis are acute and have a negative impact on women and therefore must be addressed.

6. The masculinity crisis has been exacerbated by the market decline, unemployment and the economic crisis. These have decreased the quality of life of families and undermined men's self-esteem and authority as the once-recognized head of the family. Consequently, men in some circumstances resort to committing violence against women and children as a means of showing that they can still have control over others, repeating the stereotype of what they conceive of as "being a real man". Such roots of gender-based violence must be acknowledged.

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7. Other issues are related to the lack of economic and leisure opportunities. For example, it is well known that both young men and young women engage in sexual relations as a way of gaining respect and social status in a group. In many contexts, the concept of masculinity is linked to risky sexual behaviours, leading to an increase in sexually transmitted diseases and early parenthood, with detrimental effects on the health of both men and women.

8. If gender is considered to be relational and both women's and men's issues have a significant impact on social development, then why does gender continue to be synonymous only with women? A gender perspective in education must be truly inclusive, as it is an issue that involves both sexes. While it is clear that women remain at a disadvantage in many areas, particularly in developing countries, interventions aimed at improving the situation of women will hardly be effective or sustainable if men are not involved, either through their cooperation or by making them responsible for their actions.

9. As long as the idea remains that men are the primary obstacle women face, instead of flawed education models and the cultural processes of inequity, it will be difficult to perceive any genuine development in future generations. However, it is important to recognize that in many cases, it is men themselves who refuse to adjust their preconceptions of what is masculine. These efforts should therefore receive the most intense focus in the education of young men.

10. Youth education on new, equal, equitable and complementary relationships between the sexes must go hand in hand with the promotion of positive images of male involvement in the home, responsible parenthood and the healthy sexual and reproductive development of adolescents. Effective educational programmes to involve young men consist of models that allow them to acknowledge pain, fear and suffering in a peaceful way, without committing violence against women or other men.

11. Young men have begun to view women differently in many social contexts, and today, many agree on the importance of their education and development. Given the view that both men and women reproduce gender norms, both sexes must be involved in the development and pursuit of new, healthier and more constructive paradigms, in order to build a more peaceful and equitable society. In conclusion, both public policy and the resources dedicated to education on gender equity must be aimed at fostering an inclusive perspective, based on the understanding that gender issues are important to both young women and young men and will be reflected in the way they relate to each other, their future families and society in general.